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In the first place the Coorg individual is a member of a domestic group, the *okka* or patrilineal joint-family. His closest social ties are with this group and its members, and the well-being of this group is something that is for him of supreme importance. Each such group has its own religious cult. There are daily religious observances of the members of the joint family. There are recurrent occasions on which ritual performances are called for. Any event which affects the solidarity or well-being of the group is an occasion of ritual, such as in births, deaths, and marriages. Piety, for a Coorg, is in the first place the observance of the requirements of this domestic cult.

Dr. Srinivas has described for us the various features of this domestic cult, but he has done more than that. He has helped us to see the social function of these rituals as expressing and maintaining the solidarity and continuity of the structural system. Further, he has sought, with some considerable measure of success, to reveal the meaning of the ritual idiom of the Coorg domestic cult. In any system of ritual each ritual action has its meaning, and the totality of such meanings constitutes the idiom of that system. Just as different societies have different languages so also they have their systems of ritual idiom, and it is the task of the social anthropologist to investigate a system of ritual idiom in the same way that he studies a language. To understand the way a people talk it is necessary to know the idiom of their language; to understand a religion it is necessary to have some understanding of the ritual idiom in which they express their religious sentiments. We do not understand the Coorg domestic cult unless we understand the religious meaning to the Coorgs of the lamp hanging in the hall of the house; and other features of their rites and ceremonies.

Besides being a member of a joint family (*okka*) the Coorg individual is a member of a village community which includes not only persons of his own caste but also members of other castes. The village community has its own religious cult, with its god or gods and its temple or shrine or temples. The village-deities, when properly propitiated, protect the village and its inhabitants from smallpox and plague and other supernatural evils, and afford blessings such as good health and abundant crops. Thus the cult of the village-deities is a collective action of the community. Just as the domestic cult has for its ostensible aim the preservation of the well-being of the particular group, so the village cult has for its

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aim the well-being of the village. Both these cults emphasize for an individual his membership of a particular social group, the joint family in the one instance and the village community in the other.

Three other features of social structure have to be considered in connexion with the village cult. In the first place, though the whole village community takes part in the ceremonies, different caste groups have different parts to play and are thus differentiated. Some, for example, take part in the animal sacrifice, while others have nothing to do with it. Thus a caste group within the village is able, within the cult, to establish its own unity and its separation from other groups. This is a significant feature of the caste structure of the village.

In the second place, though each village community has its own unity as exhibited in the cult performances, there is co-operation between different villages, and members of one may take part in the ceremonies of another. Thus the Coorg villages are groups within a single Coorg religious community. It is therefore not only the solidarity of the village that is exhibited in the village cult but also the religious solidarity and unity of the people of Coorg.

Thirdly, there is the fact that the local deities of the villages have been assimilated to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, as when a particular local deity is identified with Shiva or Pārvati. In this way the Coorg religious community has become incorporated as a part of that wider Hindu religious community. The incorporation, however, is only partial. In an orthodox Hindu cult the temple should be served by a Brahmin. Orthodox Hindu deities are vegetarian and dislike alcohol. But some of the Coorg village-deities demand the blood and flesh of animals and offerings of toddy. What Dr. Srinivas calls the process of Sanskritization of the Coorg village cults is therefore very far from being complete. There are very important remains of paganism. This need not surprise us when we remember the many survivals of local paganism in the Christian countries. What is significant is that in his participation in the worship of the village-deities the Coorg individual is able to think of himself as a member of the widespread Hindu religious community.

The individual in Coorg belongs to a particular joint-family, and to a particular village, but in addition he belongs by birth to a particular social group of the kind to which we apply the name

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the entire eastern fringe of Coorg have many cultural features in common with Mysore. The areas to the west of Bhāgamaṇḍla, and the north-western parts, have many cultural forms in common with South Canara, while the south-western fringe has many features in common with Malabar.

The quadrilateral formed by Mercara in the north, Siddāpur in the east, Śrīmangala in the south, and Bhāgamaṇḍla in the west has been called Coorg Proper by earlier writers. Coorg Proper is an area of greater homogeneity within Coorg, and formerly the bulk of Coorgs lived there. This area might be described as the core and centre of the culture of Coorgs.

When we speak of Mysore (or Kannaḍa) culture, or Malabar (or Malayāḷam) culture, or South Canara (or Tuḷu) culture, we are not thinking of entities unrelated to each other. Malayāḷam and Tuḷu cultures have certain features in common and, similarly, Tuḷu and Kannaḍa. Again, all three share some features. In fact, the whole of India constitutes, in a very broad sense, a single culture-area within which each linguistic area constitutes a region of greater cultural homogeneity. The recognition of the greater homogeneity of each linguistic area should not lead to the ignoring of the larger unity, and still less should it ignore the special connexions with some or all of the neighbouring areas.

A village in the Kannaḍa, Telugu, or Tamil country is a group of houses and huts huddled together in a confined space with fields and gardens stretching all round. But a different type of village prevails in Coorg Proper where Coorgs predominate: every Coorg house is built on its ancestral estate, and near it live the servants of the house, usually men of low caste, in huts of mud and bamboo with thatched roofs. On the other side of the hill or valley lives another Coorg joint family with its satellite families living close by. A few such houses and their dependent huts scattered over the hills and valleys are lumped together and called a village (*ūr*). An eastern plainsman used to seeing villages as close physical entities would be tempted at first to assert that there are no villages in Coorg Proper. Such a view, however, would be wrong. A village in Coorg Proper is real in the sense that its boundaries are known to elders, and the people of the village see themselves as a unity against other villages.

The members of a village have to co-operate on certain occasions such as weddings, funerals, festivals of the village-deity, harvest

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621 festival, hunts, dances, and thatching a newly built house. Rivalry between villages is still prevalent, and formerly feuds (*maradalé*) between villages were frequent.

162 Most people in Coorg live in villages, either themselves cultivating or supervising the cultivation of land. Exact figures are available only for 1931 when sixty out of every thousand lived in towns, while the rest lived in villages: i.e. 94 per cent. of the population lived in villages.[1] Even now, excepting educated men in government service, or in one of the learned professions, and a few commercial men, others in general prefer to live in their natal villages on account of their close attachment to their ancestral lands.

[361] There are only two towns in Coorg, Mercara, the capital, with a population of 7,112, and Vīrarājpēṭ, with 4,106.

The 1941 Census mentions the total population of Coorg as 168,726, but it does not enlighten us as to the composition of this population. The details are, however, available for 1931 when the total population was 163,327, and of this, 146,007 were Hindus, 13,777 Muslims, 3,425 Christians, and the balance of 118 was accounted for by Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis. Coorgs, with a strength of 41,026, formed the largest single group amongst the Hindus.[2]

III

197 All the important languages spoken in Coorg are Dravidian, with the exception of Hindusthāni and English. Again, detailed figures are available only for 1931 when 62,769 spoke Kannaḍa, 44,585 Koḍagi, the dialect of Coorgs, 14,914 Malayāḷam, 14,275 Tuḷu, and 10,026 Yerava, the dialect of the Yerava tribe. There were 3,007 Tamil-speakers, fewer in fact than the speakers of the Indo-Aryan language, Hindusthāni, who numbered 4,378.[3]

Professor M. B. Emeneau considers that 'the Dravidian language spoken by Coorgs is an independent language, and shows characteristics that in part connect it closely with Kannaḍa, in part with the languages of the Malabar coast, especially Malayāḷam'.[4]

[212] Coorgs make use of the Kannaḍa script on those occasions when they wish to reduce Koḍagi into writing. Such occasions are not,

[1] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. xiii, p. 7.
[2] Ibid., pp. 41–42.
[3] Ibid., p. 38.
[4] In a letter to the author.

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ing him, said '*bā kunyi*' (come, child). My informant, incensed at being called a 'child' by a low-caste Baṇṇa promptly slapped him. The term 'child' is normally used by an elder towards a youth, but only an elder of the same or equivalent or superior caste is entitled to this privilege, and not an elder of a low caste. My informant regarded the oracle as a Baṇṇa, and not as the ancestor of a friend: he had projected the normal structure into the ritual context. Needless to say he did not believe that a Coorg ancestor possessed a Baṇṇa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation.

The Baṇṇa normally occupies a low position in the hierarchy, but the fact that he is the master of the complicated technique of ancestor-propitiation, and that he is possessed by these spirits during the propitiation, temporarily put him in a high position. The contemporary decline of belief in ancestor-spirits, as well as the increasing lack of appeal of the mode of propitiation adopted by the Baṇṇa, have tended to confine him to the position normally occupied by him in the caste structure.

The Brahmin occupies the highest position in the hierarchy and is also the master of a highly complicated ritual technique. But in spite of this there is frequently a certain inconsistency between the positions occupied by him in ritual and secular contexts respectively. In secular affairs power is actually possessed by the man who has wealth and a large following, whatever his caste might be. But even he has to accord the Brahmin the highest place in ritual contexts. The complex relation prevailing between a wealthy and powerful Shūdra Hindu and his poor Brahmin priest comes to mind: the Brahmin is in the Shūdra's pay and protection, but still he has to be respected as a Brahmin and especially in ritual contexts. Where the Brahmin priest is also a scholar or holy man there does not seem to be any inconsistency between his ritual and secular roles.

V

Caste has a tendency to stress horizontal ties. It unites members of the same caste living in different villages and distinguishes them from other castes in the same village. It is extremely unlike the village community in which members of different castes are united by certain common values and are marked off from other villages. The existence of feuds between villages in the past

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emphasized the solidarity of the village and offset the separating influence of caste.

The solidarity prevalent between the various castes in a village (or *nāḍ*) finds ritual expression during *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs. On this occasion, the representatives of the priestly, artisan, and servant castes living in the village (or *nāḍ*) visit the house of every Coorg in their area, and either give a gift or perform a service characteristic of their caste. They are given in return gifts of provisions like rice, rice-flour, pepper, salt, jaggery, coconut oil, coconuts, and a giant yam (*putri geṇasu*) which is harvested during *putri*.

The local Brahmin priest visits, in turn, each Coorg house in his village (or *nāḍ*). He purifies the house by sprinkling it with a little consecrated water which he carries in a ritually pure vessel. He also gives each member of the house a tiny spoonful of consecrated water to drink. The priest is sent away with a gift of provisions.

Like the priest, the Kaṇiya astrologer visits the various Coorg houses in his village (or *nāḍ*). He informs the head of each house when the rites of *néré kaṭṭuvudu* (see pp. 230–1) and cutting the paddy sheaves should be performed. These rites are performed only during auspicious periods.

The members of the artisan castes follow the Kaṇiya. The Tachchāyiri or carpenter brings with him a gift of a new wooden ladle with which to stir the festival curry made with all the vegetables grown at this time of the year. He also brings a bamboo receptacle (*kutti*) in which the severed paddy sheaves are brought home. The Kolla or blacksmith brings a new sickle with which the sheaves are cut. The Mēda brings a new harvest basket (*putri pachchiya*) which is used in the festival. The Kumbāra or potter brings a new pot in which the harvest curry is cooked. Finally, the Poleya brings a new mat which is used in the festival.

The harvest festival is the biggest of the various calendar festivals of Coorgs, and on this occasion each of the several castes with whom Coorgs live in close and intimate contact does some service, or brings some gift, characteristic of it. Gifts are given in return to each of them. The exchange of gifts strengthens the bonds prevalent between Coorgs and other castes.

At the harvest festival each of several interdependent castes living in a village performs some essential service which cannot be performed by another, and this fact is brought home to the

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villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.[1]

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* way (see pp. 129–30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the *okka* in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nāḍ*-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

[1] Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

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Individual responsibility was not entirely ignored, however. An old usage lays down the maximum fine that could be levied on a guilty man[1] (as distinct from the *okka* of which he was a member) as nine annas and three *bhaṭṭis* of paddy. Again, when a person was guilty of a grave offence even his *okka* joined with his caste in excommunicating him.

XI

The institution of family friendship (*aruvāmé*) was formerly far more important among Coorgs than it is today. In a Coorg village houses are scattered over a wide area, and a Coorg's nearest Coorg or other high-caste neighbour is usually several hundred yards away on the other side of a hill or valley. Formerly, the jungle was heavier and there were no good roads, and these increased the difficulties of communication between neighbours. Besides, feuds were common, and hostile raids from unfriendly villages or *nāḍs* were always a possibility. A Coorg sometimes had to get up in the middle of the night to fight for his life.

Under the circumstances it is easy to see the need for socially stressing the tie of neighbourhood. Two *okkas* usually, though not always, stood in the relation of family friendship to each other, and were frequently related by marriage. The tie of family friendship was a traditional one, so that two *okkas* found that they had inherited this relationship. In the marriage rites, the *aruva*, or head of the friendly *okka*, is asked whether he is the traditional *aruva* or the *aruva* hired with gold for the occasion. The traditional family friend, it is hardly necessary to add, commanded much more respect than the family friend 'hired' for the occasion.

The relationship of family friendship was between two *okkas* and not between two individuals. The headman of the *okka* and his wife were certainly more important than the other members in this relationship, but this was in virtue of the positions they occupied in the *okka*.

At a wedding or death in an *okka* the members of the 'friendly' *okka* had certain duties, duties which are even now performed. The headman of the 'friendly' *okka* is the master of ceremonies on ritual occasions. The younger members of his *okka* and womenfolk

[1] It is likely that the fine was paid out of the private funds of the guilty man, and that where he had none, his *okka* came to his rescue.

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are also required to render help. For instance, at a funeral the womenfolk of the 'friendly' *okka* were required to cook and serve food to the mourners.

XII

No reference has been made so far to territorial groups in Coorg except for mentioning, in Section V, an instance of the co-operation that prevails between the various castes living in a village or *nāḍ* during the harvest festival. The village is the smallest and most important of the territorial groups, and the *nāḍ*, consisting of several villages is the next bigger group. Traditionally Coorg was divided into thirty-five *nāḍs* and twelve *kombus*. A *kombu* literally means 'horn' or 'branch', and in the administrative context it means the area covered by the sound of a brass horn. It is not known what purpose was served by this unit. The twelve *kombus* together formed the kingdom of Coorg ruled by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas.

It has already been mentioned that a village in Coorg Proper is not as physically compact as a village in the eastern plains. But this does not make it any the less real. The village acts as a unit on certain occasions and its unity obtains ritual expression. The people of a village have a great attachment for it. Besides, every village has a council of elders, and the council is presided over by the *ūr takka* or village headman, whose office is hereditary. The headmanship (or any other traditional office) is always conceived of as belonging to a certain *okka* and not to an individual.

Like the village, the *nāḍ* is a unit which corresponds to the sentiments of the people, and is not merely an administrative division imposed by the Rājas. The number of villages in a *nāḍ* varies from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*: there are 11 villages in Bēngunāḍ, 5 in Ballatnāḍ, 16 in Kaḍiyetnāḍ, 10 in Eḍénālknāḍ, and 9 in Mūrnāḍ. These are ancient *nāḍs*, but the boundary of a *nāḍ* has frequently been changed in the past. It was changed, for instance, when the entire administration of the country was reorganized by either Muddu Rāja (1638–86) or his son Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II, 1687–1736). The number of *nāḍs* remained 35 as before, but their boundaries were changed. Subsequently, under the British, the number of *nāḍs* were reduced successively to 28, 24, 19, and 11.

The headman of a *nāḍ* is called *nāḍ takka*, and while every

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634 Above the *nāḍ*-headmen there are *sīmé*- (or *dēsha*-) headmen, of whom there are eight in all. The *sīmé*-headman has precedence over the *nāḍ*-headman at a gathering where both are present.

634 692 631 The division of the country into twelve *kombus* or 'horns', and the establishment of four *paṭṭis* (literally, the open paved yard before a Coorg's house) or courts for hearing appeals from village and *nāḍ*-assemblies, appear to be only administrative devices imposed from above, and not traditional institutions of the people [533] which functioned vigorously. The *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*, a folksong which gives an account of the administrative system introduced by either Muddu Rāja or Doḍḍa Vīrappa,[1] mentions the existence of twelve *kombus*, and gives a list of the eight *sīmé*-headmen and four appellate courts. A caution should be entered here against treating this song as evidence of the system as it actually existed. The picture it presents is too tidy and systematized, and it is not improbable that it sacrifices accuracy for neatness and order.

It is likely that before Coorg was conquered by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas the biggest territorial unit was a group of two or three or more *nāḍs* led by a chief who called himself Nāyaka. The chiefs constantly fought among themselves, and this made it easier for the Lingāyaṭ Rājas to conquer them and extend their authority over the whole of Coorg.

Two or three *nāḍs* seem to have also come together for purposes of defence against a common enemy, for hunting, and for hearing appeals from the decisions of lower assemblies like the village- [23] assembly and *nāḍ*-assembly. It is interesting to note, however, that while folklore contains occasional references to an appeal to an assembly composed of the men of two or three *nāḍs*, there is no reference to an appeal to a *paṭṭi*, one of the four appellate courts mentioned in the *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*.

XIII

621 504 The village represents a different type of solidarity from caste. The latter stresses the ties prevalent between members of the same caste scattered in different villages, whereas the former stresses the ties of the different castes living in the same village. Caste stresses the importance of the high castes and more or less ignores the lowest castes. When a Coorg says that when there is a wedding

[1] N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 29.

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in a village every *okka* must send at least one man and one woman to help in the work of the wedding, what he really means is that when there is a wedding among Coorgs or other high castes, every high caste *okka* must send one man and one woman. This does not, however, apply to the lowest castes. The latter, of course, do their share of the wedding work, but they are not included in the rule mentioned above. The contribution of the low castes is essential on every occasion, but they co-operate at a different level from the high castes. Again, where there is a wedding or death among the lowest castes, the high castes certainly help, but do not otherwise participate in the event. In brief, the solidarity of a caste results in a stressing of the ties between the members of the same caste living in different villages, while the solidarity of a village results in stressing the ties between members of different castes living in the same village. Caste ties cut across village ties, while village ties both limit the extension of caste ties beyond the village and stress the interdependence of the various castes forming a local community.

The unity of the village is stressed when disaster overtakes one of the *okkas*. For instance, when a house is destroyed by fire every *okka* in the village has to contribute in cash, kind, and labour towards the building of a new house and the maintenance of the unlucky *okka* till they are able to stand on their own feet. The latter are required to repay the money and goods given to them some time after they have recovered from the disaster. Several years ago the Kōṭera house in Bāḍaga village was destroyed by fire and the entire village co-operated in building them a new house.

When a death occurs among Coorgs, the news is announced by the firing of a rifle at regular intervals. Everyone who hears the shots has to suspend all work, including agricultural work, and proceed at once to the mourning house. The news of the death is also communicated through messengers belonging to the Poleya caste, and the Poleya servant of any Coorg house may be commandeered for this purpose. The master may not object.

Every *okka* in the village has to stand by the bereaved *okka* during the mourning period. They are required to attend to the fields and gardens of the bereaved *okka* till the latter are freed from the ritual mourning. They have also to supply the bereaved *okka* with food until the corpse is removed from the house: there

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is a taboo on cooking being done in the mourning house till the corpse is removed.

On certain occasions the entire village co-operates, though the lower castes co-operate at a different level from others. An example will make clear what we mean. Every caste in the village co-operates during the harvest festival of Coorgs. It is the harvest festival of *Coorgs* alone, and not, for instance, of the Mēdas or Poleyas. The Mēdas beat the tom-tom and Poleyas play on their pipes to the dancing of Coorgs. Every Coorg *okka* has to send all the adult men in it to the village dance and hunt. Poleyas and Mēdas act as beaters at this hunt while the other castes do the shooting. Later, there is a dinner for the entire village, called, appropriately enough, *ūrormé*, i.e. 'village harmony', where the game killed in the hunt is cooked. Every male member of the village participates in this dinner, Coorgs and equivalent castes sitting together, while Mēdas and Poleyas form separate groups. The meat is cooked by Coorgs and equivalent castes, while every house brings its own supply of *puṭṭ*, or cooked rice-flour, which is eaten with the curry. The Brahmin does not participate in the village dinner as it is cooked by castes lower to him in the hierarchy. Besides, he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. It may be noted that the Brahmin is almost as frequently excluded from village activities as the Untouchable. The Brahmin does not hunt or dance, nor does he favour the propitiation of deities with animal sacrifice and liquor.

[574] Every member of the village is required to observe certain rules during the harvest festival. He has to keep the door of his house open and the sacred domestic lamps lit. He must be hospitable to parties of singers and dancers and mix with other villagers. He must refrain from abusing and fighting even if there is provocation from the other party.

Though parties of Coorg singers did not visit the houses of Mēdas and Poleyas, even the latter were required to observe the rules. Every caste, including Mēdas and Poleyas, was present when inquiry into cases of breaches of rules took place.

[585] A wedding in a Coorg house requires the co-operation of all the castes in the village, and the fee payable to them is fixed by custom. It is the same with the festival of the village-deity, though sometimes the Poleyas are almost entirely excluded from this festival. During the festival of Kētrappa at Bēngūr, the Poleyas may not be

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During the festival of Kētrappa at Bengar the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or *nāḍ*), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival (*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity (*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure (*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than

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XIV

533 A band is considered essential to every ritual occasion: at *mangalas*, calendar festivals, and festivals of village-deities a band plays most of the time.

[585] A close relative comes to a wedding accompanied by his own band. He must be received by the hosts with band, and again, when he departs, the hosts must accompany him a little distance with their band leading the way. When the relative finally takes leave of the hosts he pays the latters' band three *paṇas*, one for the men blowing the horns, another for the pipers, and the third for the drummers.

[764] Relatives coming to pay their last respects to the dead man are also required to be accompanied by their band. If they are not accompanied by their own band, they arrange to hire the services of the local band, at some distance from the mourning-house.

[765] A band plays before a mourning-house too, but the beat (*chāvu paré* = death-beat) employed on this occasion is distinctive, and it may not be employed on an auspicious occasion.

533 585 [556] The presence of a band testifies to the social importance of the occasion or person. A wedding at which there was no band would be inconceivable to a Coorg. Again, if at a wedding an important guest were not received with a band, he would regard it as an insult. Coorgs have an elaborate code of courtesy, and this has to be scrupulously observed.

[574] The *okkas* of the bride and groom have each to give several dinners during the wedding. These dinners are of two kinds: one in which the chief guests are the members of the particular bridal party's own village, and another in which the important guests are from other villages.

621 585 574 The above distinction is important, as it throws light on the social structure. A village forms a unity, and ideally speaking it is not only the bride's (or groom's) *okka*, but her (or his) entire village which ought to act as hosts. Formerly they did not sit down to dinner with the guests from other villages, but waited on the latter along with the members of the host *okka*. They sat down to dinner later.

On the day before the wedding, every house in the village has to send one man and one woman to the bridal house to help in the wedding work. They have to do every kind of work which the

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621 585 574 wedding involves, but their primary duties seem to be cooking the huge dinners and serving them to the guests, and looking after the guests generally.

After the villagers have arrived the head of the bridal house requests them to take charge of the wedding for him and to exercise due economy in the discharge of their duties. In the evening there is a dinner for the villagers which is called *ūrū patti* (village dinner), and which seems to mark their assumption of responsibility. There is another village dinner on the day after the marriage at which the villagers return the 'ladle and spoon' to the bridal *okka*. The return of the 'ladle and spoon' marks the end of the villagers' duties at the wedding. The villagers apologize to the head of the bridal *okka* for any faults they might have committed in the discharge of their duties, and the head thanks them for the great help rendered by them.

621 765 574 The members of a village in which a death has occurred are required to help the bereaved *okka* in several ways during mourning and the latter *okka* give the villagers two dinners at the conclusion of ritual mourning to express their thanks. The services rendered, and the dinners given, are both obligatory, and they are among the many links which bind together the members of the village community.

621 574 Besides the above dinners the members of a village occasionally dine together and this is referred to as '*ūrormé*' or 'village harmony'. The solidarity of the village expresses itself at these dinners, even though all the castes in the village do not sit together at them. It has to be remembered in this connexion that the nuclear unit of the Coorg community, the *okka*, is normally a commensal unit. The sub-caste too occasionally dines together, and one of the punishments inflicted on the excommunicated man is that he may not be admitted to the caste dinners.

585 574 On the day after the wedding the bride goes to the groom's house where a few rites are performed which symbolize the admission of the bride into the groom's *okka*. The marriage is consummated that night, and the bride returns to her natal house after spending a few days in the groom's house. She is not allowed to be seen by members of her natal village until a dinner has been given to them.

Richter tells us that formerly the bride returning to her natal home was 'treated as unclean', 'shut up like a woman after child-

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596 622 hereditary in certain *okkas*. The eldest member of the senior agnatic branch succeeded to the office in question.

596 621 Every high-caste *okka* has to send at least one man and one woman to a wedding, festival, or a common village task like repairing a road, or weeding a temple compound; and all the adult males in an *okka* are required to attend a village dance or hunt. A defaulting *okka* is fined.

596 829 The members of an *okka* have to live together from birth till death. They are bound together by numerous strong ties, and they co-operate in performing common tasks. After death, they become ancestors who continue to show an interest in their *okka* and demand propitiation from their descendants. The *okka* is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points on it. Coorgs themselves clearly state that the *okka* has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his *okka*. There is a great desire for the continuance of the *okka*, and there is no greater calamity than its extinction. When an *okka* is threatened with extinction certain traditional devices are resorted to to perpetuate it.

596 [342] The ancestral house and estate are sacred, and even today a Coorg likes to have a wedding or funeral performed in the ancestral house. The unity and solidarity of an *okka* find expression in ritual. Its strength is projected to the 'mystical' plane.

An individual is normally identified with his *okka*, but such identification of the individual with his *okka* is in extra-*okka* contexts, and it does not at all mean that the *okka* in question is undivided from within. Normally the elementary families inside an *okka* are potential groups of fission. The principles of segregation of the sexes and the unity of the members of a generation which run right through Coorg society are also at work inside the *okka*, uniting some members against the others. There are also tensions between individuals, especially among the women members.

596 572 Every Coorg *okka* is bound by the ties of friendship (*aruvāmé*) to another neighbouring Coorg *okka*. This is a traditional relationship between two neighbouring Coorg *okkas*, and it involves certain ritual and social duties. It is frequently mutual, and affinal relations between the two friendly *okkas* are common.

596 Formerly every Coorg *okka* had one or more Poleya or other low-

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drawn. The descendants of the *X okka* who are looking on intervene and stop the fight.

Sometimes the oracle, possessed by a particular ancestor, inquires into the state of the ancestral estate. He asks the members of the *okka* to take him to the paddy-fields, and he might even sharply criticize them for not paying sufficient attention to the ancestral estate. He might inquire after the welfare of the members of the *okka*. It is said that sometimes these oracles point out treasure troves.

The living members ask the oracle questions concerning the various matters affecting them. 'Will my child recover from illness?' 'Why is a son not born to me?' And so on.

Before a particular ancestor leaves him, the oracle goes to the ancestor-shrine, where one of his party sacrifices a fowl or pig. Liquor, parched rice, coconut, and plantains are all offered to the ancestor represented by the oracle. The latter eats the parched rice and drinks the liquor, after which the ancestor who is possessing him leaves him. He gets ready to impersonate the next ancestor named by the head of the *okka*.

The last ancestor to possess the oracle is the Founder, in whose honour the oracle wears the upper part of his *téré* equipment. A pig is usually sacrificed to the Founder. The head of the *okka* requests the Founder to bless the descendants.

On the next morning the sacrificed animals are cooked and the entire village is invited to dinner. Thus an ancestor-propitiation is also an occasion for the expression of the solidarity of the village.

The Baṇṇas get as their perquisites the heads of the animals sacrificed, provisions, some cooked meat, and also a little cash. This is in addition to the fixed amount of paddy they are paid annually at harvest. The Baṇṇas in a village serve the Coorg *okkas* in that village or *nāḍ* during ancestor-propitiations and other occasions when their services are required, and in return for this they receive a certain amount of paddy annually. The relationship between a Baṇṇa family and a Coorg *okka* has a certain continuity and members of the former are well acquainted with the history of the latter. The Baṇṇa family almost becomes the repository of the traditions and history of the Coorg *okkas* it serves.

The Baṇṇa oracle is identified with the ancestor who is possessing him, and his acts and words are considered to be the ancestor's acts and words. In fact, an oracle is always identified with the

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796 526 578 occasion also canalizes the rivalry that exists in certain forms that are not destructive of the social order. Coorgs themselves treat this part of their calendar festivals as providing an arena for the expression of inter-*okka* rivalry.

596 796 621 Co-operation between *okkas* also receives emphasis at these festivals. Every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) is required to send all the adult males in it to the collective dances which are held at the harvest festival. Again, there is a collective hunt at the end of the harvest festival (and usually at the end of the festivals of the village-deities) to which every *okka* has to send *all* the adult males in it. Failure to do so would result in a fine being levied on the defaulting *okka*.

When the festival of a village-deity is being performed, every *okka* (excluding *okkas* of very low castes) has to send a man to help in festival work such as clearing the weeds growing in the temple compound and on the road along which the deity will be taken out in procession.

There is also a minute division of the ritual tasks among the high caste *okkas* in the village. For instance, the representative of one *okka* carries the image of the deity, while the representative of another *okka* carries a lamp and the representative of yet another *okka* carries the money-box (*cheppu*), and so on. Formerly these tasks were looked upon as privileges, and an *okka* was jealous of the privileges to which it was entitled by tradition and custom.

The village is a unity made up of the various *okkas* in it. The individuality of each participating *okka* and the unity of all the *okkas* in the village[1] are both brought out in Professor Emeneau's description of a dance held at the festival of Bhadrakāḷi at Karavalé-bāḍga near Mercara. Professor Emeneau writes:

> this dance is performed on several days both at the temple and on the dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of each *sib* [*okka*] in the village, carrying each a *koḍi* or staff surmounted by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has the right arm bare and a fold of the turban hanging down his back. If all the male members of a *sib* should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the *koḍi*

[1] Castes like the Poleya are excluded from this unity. It is recognized that such castes perform extremely useful tasks both in day-to-day living and at festivals, but their position in the social hierarchy excludes them from certain positions and tasks. The principle of stratification modifies the idea of the unity of a village.

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must be carried by a member of another *sib* along with that of his own *sib*. It is the *sibs* that are represented at the performance and individuals who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential part of the performance, carry no staffs, do not wear their dress in the distinctive manner of the *sib*-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance which is forbidden for the staff-carriers.[1]

The calendar festivals as well as the festivals of the village-deity emphasize both the solidarity and the individuality of the *okka* in a variety of ways. The games which are a part of some festivals give expression to and canalize inter-*okka* rivalry. All the *okkas* in a village have to co-operate in certain common tasks and games, but even this co-operation is on the basis of the acceptance of the *okka* as the nuclear unit of society. The participation of all the *okkas* in the common tasks stresses not only the unity of the larger groups such as caste, village, and *nāḍ*, but also of the unity and individuality of the participating *okkas*. This is clearly brought out in the dance at Karavalébāḍga.

XVII

Every Coorg *okka* has a relationship of friendship with another Coorg *okka* living not far away. Such friendship is between two *okkas*, and not between the individual members of them. It is traditional and institutionalized. It is usually, though not always, mutual, and the headman and mistress of the friend-*okka* have duties, ritual as well as social, on occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. These duties are in addition to those derived from common membership of the village. (See Chapter II, Section XI.)

It has been stated earlier (see Chapter II, Section XI) that the social stressing of family friendship offset the disadvantage of the lack of any real neighbourhood in a village in Coorg Proper. But isolated as a Coorg *okka* was, it was not completely without neighbours. Only they were not the right kind of neighbours. The Poleya or other low-caste servants of the Coorg *okka* lived in huts near by, but the few small Poleya familie scould not give effective help in beating off a raiding party from another village; and their caste prevented them from participation in the ritual of a Coorg house. They could only do menial jobs and carry messages.

The relationship between a Coorg *okka* and its servant families

[1] 'Kinship and Marriage among the Coorgs', *J.R.A.S.* (Bengal), iv, 1938, p. 124.

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has been considered earlier. The economic part of the relationship was certainly very important, but it was only a part of a total relationship which had several aspects. In Coorg folklore there are instances of a servant's great loyalty to his master, and of the latter's great affection for the former. Achchu Koṭṭa, a Poleya servant of Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa, threw himself on the funeral pyre of his master. Ayyaṇṇa was very ill when a caravan from Bēngūr set out for Malabar, and Achchu Koṭṭa joined this caravan against his master's wishes. Before the caravan had crossed into Malabar, Achchu Koṭṭa heard that his master had died. Torn with grief and remorse, Achchu Koṭṭa ran back to Bēngūr only to see the flames of the funeral pyre consuming the body of his dead master. Without a second thought Achchu Koṭṭa jumped into the fire. The members of the Kallumāḍa *okka* erected a stone in memory of Achchu Koṭṭa outside their ancestor-shrine. When an ancestor-propitiation is held in the Kallumāḍa *okka*, offerings of food and drink are made to Achchu Koṭṭa's stone.[1]

Formerly, a man and woman from the servant family or families observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. The bond between master and servant was strong enough to find expression in ritual.

The *de facto* abolition of slavery by the opening of coffee plantations in the middle of the last century, and the great changes of the last hundred years, have contributed to the weakening of the bond between the master-*okka* and the servant families. But even now, when a Poleya does a piece of work, the mistress of the house gives him a small quantity of castor oil in addition to the wages (*kochchi*), paid in paddy. The application of castor oil to the head is supposed to have a 'cooling' effect on the entire body. Hard work, especially in the sun, brings about 'heat' in the body which needs to be 'cooled' by the application of castor oil to the head. The giving of castor oil by the mistress shows her concern for the health and well-being of the servant: it is an act of friendship.

[1] *Paṭṭōlé Paḷumé*, p. 364.

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VI

THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

I

THERE is a considerable body of ritual directly referring to the *okka*, but this is not the case when we come to larger social units such as the village (*ūr*), *nāḍ* (each consisting of a few villages), and *sīmé* or *dēsha* (each consisting of a few *nāḍs*). These large social units were never as closely-knit as the *okka*. The festivals of the village-deities constitute an important source of information on these units, even though only a small part of each festival refers directly to them. Of the calendar festivals, only the harvest festival is important. The festivals of the village-deities, the harvest festival, and folklore are the chief sources for this chapter.

A 'village-deity' does not necessarily mean the deity of a single village. In fact it is common to find two or three villages combining to celebrate the festival of a village-deity. There is usually more than one deity at the festival of a village-deity. Every temple in a village usually contains more than one deity, one chief deity from whom the temple derives its name, and the rest secondary. For instance, the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi temple in Kuklūr derives its name from the fact that the chief deity in the temple is Bhadrakāḷi. There is a shrine containing her image, and the other deities in this shrine are Ganēsha, Sārtāvu (Ayyappa), and a *linga* (representing Shiva) said to have been brought from Benares. Outside the shrine, but inside the temple compound, are stones representing Ayyappa, Pattu Kūṭ Pātāḷa (literally, ten spirits of the underworld), and Kuṭṭatammé (the mother of Kuṭṭa).[1] Besides these, the Poleyas of Kuklūr keep representations of some deities worshipped exclusively by them, outside the temple compound on an improvised platform. All the deities in Kuklūr are considered to be subordinate to Bhadrakāḷi. Very frequently there is more than one temple in a village. In Armēri in Beppunāḍ, for instance, there are

[1] Kuṭṭatammé has a temple to herself in Kuṭṭa in south Coorg. She is a famous deity and an annual festival is held in her honour.

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several temples: one dedicated to Bhagavati, another to Mahādēva, two to Ayyappa, and six to Raktēshwari (identified with Chamuṇḍi). The temples dedicated to Bhagavati, Mahādēva, and Ayyappa have Brahmin priests who worship the deities by using Sanskrit *mantras*, whereas those dedicated to Raktēshwari do not have Brahmin priests, and pigs are sacrificed annually to her. There are two modes of worship, the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, and in the festival of a village-deity these two modes are found mixed in varying proportions.

Usually there is more than one temple in a village, and a temple contains more than one deity. The temples in a village might be either Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic, or might represent varying degrees of compromise between the two elements. Finally, a village-deity might also be the deity of more than one village.

The festival of a village-deity requires a certain amount of co-operation between the various temples in a village, and not infrequently between villages. For instance, the festivals of the various deities in a village are so arranged that they do not clash if not actually dovetail. The festivals of the deities Kētrappa and Chaunḍi in Bēngūr occur at the same time, but they dovetail remarkably considering the elaborateness of the ritual that is performed. A kind of offering known as *térémuḍi* (usually a man wearing *téré* equipment) is sent by both the Bhagavati (in common parlance, Povvedi) and Chaunḍi temples to the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day (which is also called the *namné* or 'festival day') of the biennial Kētrappa festival.

A few miles from Bēngūr is Balmāvṭi, which has an important temple dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). This deity also has a very elaborate biennial festival, similar to Kētrappa's, but the interesting point is that the two festivals are performed in alternate years. When the 'big festival' of Kētrappa is being performed, Bhagavati of Balmāvṭi has a 'small festival', and vice versa. That is to say, this arrangement implies some co-operation between Begunāḍ and Ballatnāḍ. This is all the more surprising as formerly there was a feud (*maradalé*) between these two *nāḍs*, and this feud seems to have been a long and bitter one.

There is another type of co-operation to which reference must be made here. The Baṇṇas and Maléyas who officiate as oracles and dancers (wearing *téré*) at the festival of Kētrappa come from the villages Saṇṇa Pulikōṭu and Balmāvti respectively. The services of

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621 Baṇṇas and Maléyas are in demand in surrounding villages, but 796 they manage to fulfil all their ritual engagements. Similarly, 535 Paṇikas from the village Biligunda officiate at the festival of 791 Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. These Paṇikas too are very busy people, serving as they do a number of villages. But the people of Kuklūr have ensured their services by giving them, in the past, an advance (*iḍu*) of Rs50 and two gold bangles. This is paid in addition to the customary fees paid after every festival. The payment of the advance guarantees the Paṇika's attendance and service at the festival. It is clear that the Paṇika or Baṇṇa or Maléya can only fulfil his engagements if the festivals do not clash with each other. The Baṇṇa is essential at the festival of a village-deity, and it is perhaps his list of engagements which ensures co-operation between the villages he serves.

796 The saying 'kētrappang pātradoḍané', meaning 'the entire pot 776 of toddy for Kētrappa', testifies to the deity Kētrappa's great liking 273 for toddy. Part of the ritual of the festival of Kētrappa consists in fetching toddy from the Kopaṭṭi hills, about seven miles from Bēngūr. The Kuḍiyas (a tribe) in the Kopaṭṭi hills tap the toddy, and the festival-priests go to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day of the festival carrying new earthen pots (*kaléyas*) filled with paddy, which is the perquisite of the Kuḍiyas. These pots are brought back on the sixteenth day, and toddy is offered to Kētrappa and other deities in Bēngūr on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days. The Kuḍiyas visit the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day to offer their homage to the deity, watch the ritual, and receive a share of meat and toddy.

Every priestly (*kāvukāra*) *okka* in Bēngūr sends at least one representative to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day. They all leave the village at about 4 a.m., after taking a bath in cold water and donning ritually pure robes. They are in a condition of purity and other villagers may not look at them till they have crossed the boundary of the village. Both when they go to deposit the pots and to bring back the pots full with toddy some esoteric ritual takes [787] place in the Kopaṭṭi hills. The festival-priests are very secretive about it, but I learn that all the ritual centres round the possession of a Kuḍiya oracle by Ayyappa, a deity of the Kuḍiyas in the Kopaṭṭi hills.

796 The festival necessarily implies co-operation between Bēngūr people and a hill tribe living in inaccessible hills covered with

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swords before it while it is being carried in state, while the women carry the sacred dish-lamp and the *pōḷiya* box.[1] Again, each festival-priest may be required to provide a certain votive offering like *kuduré* ('horse'), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), *ettu pōraṭa* (bullock loaded with rice), and so on. The oracles (*tiruvaḷa*) also run traditionally in certain *okkas*.

The entire work of the festival is distributed among the various high-caste *okkas* in the village. (The Mēdas and Poleyas, though they may have important roles, are nowhere festival-priests.) The work is divided meticulously: for instance, at the Kētrappa festival, a man belonging to one *okka* carries Kētrappa's image up to the temple compound and then hands it over to another belonging to a different *okka* who carries it for about 12 feet and places it on a bench. Division of festival labour is thorough and minute, and formerly a duty was looked upon as a privilege.

According to the song sung at the festival of Kētrappa, the *okkas* which are festival-priests today all formed part of the original caravan which went to Malabar and brought the deity to Bēngūr. Incidents which form part of the festival are 'explained' by reference to this caravan: for instance, the Kētrappa image is brought from its normal resting-place which is the Taṭṭanḍa house on the seventeenth day of the festival and deposited in the Aréyanḍa house for three days, after which it is taken back to the Taṭṭanḍa house. This is explained in the song by reference to the fact that the deity stayed in the Aréyanḍa house while a temple was built for him when he first came to Bēngūr. The important fact for us is that the song refers to this incident. The song provides a charter and an explanation of the incidents taking place in the festival.

IV

The festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi of Kuklūr, near Vīrarājpēṭ in south Coorg, now briefly described, may be regarded as typical of the festivals of village-deities. These festivals last for several days, involve very elaborate and complicated ritual, and imply the co-operation of several castes, and frequently of two or three villages.

[1] The *pōḷiya* box is a box of plaited cane, containing an odd number of measures of rice, odd number of coconuts, plantains, jaggery cubes, and betel leaves and areca-nut. It is carried by a married woman on auspicious occasions such as marriage

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796 621 Every village in Coorg, and occasionally two or three villages together, celebrate either annually or once every few years the festival of a village-deity. These festivals have the same structure all over Coorg Proper, and a description of any one of these festivals gives one an idea of the religious life of the people. But this should not lead one to conclude that there are not any important differences between the festivals of different village-deities.

[805] The ritual life of a Coorg is regulated with reference to the very accurate solar calendar which prevails in the Tuḷu-Malayāḷam- and Tamil-speaking areas.[1] The festival of a village-deity starts on a certain day in a particular solar month, and goes on for seven or nine or eleven or fifteen or twenty-one days according to local custom. Local custom again decides the length of the interval between two festivals: it may be a year or two years or more.

The festival of a village-deity usually begins with the *tappaḍaka* ceremony at which all[2] the assembled villagers take a vow to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions till the evening of the *nammé* or 'festival day' which occurs towards the end. At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the tenth day is the 'festival day' and the dietetic restrictions are broken on the tenth night. The eighth day of the festival is the *paṭṇi* or 'fast day', and on this day villagers have to subsist on pancakes and the sweet liquid dish, *pāyasa*.

There is a lull in the ritual after the administering of the vows till the 'fast day'. It does not, however, mean total absence of ritual: some routine ritual acts such as the beating of drums and dancing before the temple of the deity are performed. Also preparations are made for the later important days: the roads and the approaches to the temple are cleared of weeds.

The eighth and tenth days are important days, as mentioned earlier. On the twelfth day there is a dinner for all the men in the village (excluding the Brahmin priests), and the 'village goat' (*ūraḍu*) and the two village fowls (*ūru kōḷi*), sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi on the tenth night, are cooked and eaten at this dinner.

[1] The people in Kannaḍa and Telugu countries regulate their ritual life mainly with reference to the lunar calendar. But the upper castes need to refer to the solar calendar also for some of their festivals and ritual.

[783] [2] Poleyas are usually excluded from participation in these ceremonies. They are either totally excluded from the festival or, where they are allowed to participate, they do so at a different level from the rest. The Mēdas are never excluded from the festival, but are allowed to participate at a different level from the high-caste people on the one hand and the Poleyas on the other. Custom, in this respect, varies from village to village.

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On the first of *kādiyār* (Taurus), at about 8 a.m., the members of Kuklūr village gather together before the temple of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. The Brahmin priest of the temple worships the deity, and then the Bhadrakāḷi oracle, Shri Tātaṇḍra Kāryappa, becomes possessed by the deity and, while possessed, he issues instructions as to how to conduct the festival. He allots the work of the festival among the various Coorg *okkas* in the village and decides the dates of the fast and festival days. These days as well as the work which each *okka* has to do have already been decided by custom, and one might say that the oracle only decides according to custom. Sometimes, however, he makes minor alterations to suit special circumstances.

An elder of the Moṇṇaṇḍra *okka* then administers the festival vows to the assembled villagers. The headmanship of the Bhadrakāḷi temple runs in the Moṇṇaṇḍra *okka*, and to him as *dēva takka* belongs the right of administering oaths. A member of the Kuṭṭaṇḍa *okka* then dances the 'peacock dance' before the temple, carrying a bundle of peacock feathers. The dancer dances to the beat of the Poleya's drum.

No ritual is performed on the second day. On the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days, the representatives of the Kuṭṭaṇḍa *okka* dances the peacock dance a hundred and one times round the stone post before the temple. Four Coorgs sing the Bhadrakāḷi song to the beat of a big drum (*dōḷu*).

On the eighth day a partial fast is observed till dusk when a horn is blown which puts an end to the fast. At night, after dinner, there is a fancy-dress (*bōḍu*) show in which Coorg men take part. They dress themselves as *sanyasis*, Māpiḷḷa traders from Malabar, Mēda drummers, and so on. The ways and customs of different castes and people from different parts are satirized in the fancy-dress show. In 1941 (when I witnessed the festival) the marriage of a Coorg girl with a Tamil Mudaliar man was satirized. Coorgs do not approve of marriage with non-Coorgs and this disapproval expresses itself in a variety of ways.[1] Such marriages are still unusual.

After the fancy-dress show at the threshing-yard (*kaḷa*) of the

[1] I remember an attempt to pass a formal resolution of censure against a high-placed Coorg gentlemen who had married a non-Coorg. This was during the harvest festival when the various branches of the *okka* are expected to assemble at the ancestral house. The attempt failed conspicuously as a very important branch of the *okka* living outside Coorg failed to turn up.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Nandiyaṇḍa *okka*, those taking part in the fancy-dress as well as the spectators go to the temple along with the Poleya oracles. The latter dance outside the temple, before the platform where representations of their deities are kept. After this dance the fancy-dress men proceed to every high-caste house in Kuklūr, beginning with the house of the *nāḍ*-headman and ending with the house of the Brahmin priest of the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The order in which they should proceed to the various houses has been fixed by custom. At each house the fancy-dress men are treated to coffee, coconut, plantains, and cooked rice dough (*puṭṭ*).

The duties, contributions in cash or kind, and offerings which each Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr has to make are clearly laid down. These duties run in the *okkas* concerned, and they may not be altered except with their consent. When an *okka* dies out or migrates to a different part of Coorg and a new *okka* from outside buys its property, the latter steps into the rights and duties of the former.[1]

The performance of the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi requires the co-operation of several castes. In the case of all the co-operating castes except Coorgs the contribution to the work of the festival is on the basis of caste. In the case of Coorgs, however, it is on the basis of *okka*. Every Coorg *okka* in Kuklūr is a priestly *okka* at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāḷi.

The Māḷeṭṭira, Moṇṇaṇḍra, and Nandiyaṇḍa *okkas* are each required to make offerings of an *ettu pōraṭa* (rice loaded on a pair of bullocks), *chūḷé* ('prostitute'), and *kuduré* ('horse'). These offerings are made on different days towards the end of the festival. A young boy from each of the three *okkas* is dressed as a girl and he is called a 'prostitute'. On the eleventh afternoon the three 'prostitutes' run a race and this is followed by a race of the three 'horses'.

A hollow 'horse', minus legs and tail, is made with plaited split bamboo, and in the middle of its back the 'horse' has an opening large enough to allow a man's head and shoulders to pass through. One man sits on the shoulders of another and the head and shoulders of the top man are made to pass through the opening in the bamboo 'horse'. The lower man's head is hidden by the bamboo frame. The frame is decorated with garlands of flowers.

[1] At the Kĕtrappa festival the immigrant Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* now perform all the duties which once belonged to the Ayyaṇḍa *okka*. The latter died out and the Paṭṭamāḍa bought their lands and settled down in Bĕngūr.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

On the ninth afternoon the villagers go in state to the Bhadrakāḷi temple, accompanied by the three 'horses'.[1] The latter run round the inner shrine thrice. After this is over, Coorg men dance the 'torch dance' (*boḷakāṭ*)—actually they hold in their hands swords (*kaḍatalés*) or *chauris* (yak-tail whisks). Four Coorg drummers stand in the centre of the circle formed by the dancers, beating their small drums. As they beat the drums they sing the Bhadrakāḷi song. The outer circle of dancers do not, however, sing this song, but a different one which consists mostly of the names of deities interspersed with short interjections such as '*ho!*', '*ha!*', and '*he!*': people dancing the torch dance always sing such a song.

After the dance is over, the Brahmin priests treat the Coorg devotees to coffee, and a dish made of parched rice mixed with jaggery and grated coconut. Coorgs sit on the steps all round the shrine and the Brahmins serve them, taking care, however, not to touch them. Only the priests may enter the kitchen or the inner shrine.[2]

The Poleyas who stand outside the temple compound then light reed torches in honour of one of *their* deities. They frequently shake the torches and this sends forth a shower of sparks. This is called *tūḍ nammé* (torch festival). They then let fly twenty-five chickens which perch on the roof of the temple compound. The upper-caste people who are inside the temple now climb up the roofs and catch the chickens, which belong to those who catch them.

The Poleya is normally the servant of the Coorg. He works for his master in the latter's field and house, and in return for this he is paid in paddy and straw annually. Usually the Poleya, like the Brahmin, is the receiver of goods from the Coorg.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival the live chickens offered by Poleyas ultimately reach their Coorg masters. It is like a gift by Poleyas as a caste to Coorgs as a caste, and such a gift emphasizes inter-caste solidarity. Caste has a natural tendency to stress

[1] Any other *okkas* which have vowed to make offerings of 'horses' also join the procession.

[2] The Brahmins usually receive material goods in exchange for the ritual services they perform. Every *okka* in the village annually gives the local Brahmins a certain amount of paddy and straw during harvest. This is in addition to payments for specific services. During the festival the Brahmin gives the members of the village some cooked food which has been earlier consecrated by being offered to the deity.

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other Coorgs he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. People respect him greatly for his piety. He is frequently contrasted with other oracles, who, in their day-to-day lives, are neither conspicuously pious nor virtuous.

Poleyas may not enter the temple of Bhadrakāḷi. Images and representations of their deities are placed on an improvised platform outside the temple compound. The Poleya oracles dance before this platform.

Some of the duties performed by the Poleyas, however, require them to exercise power over people belonging to the higher castes, and this has the effect of compensating them for the low position they normally occupy in the caste structure. The Poleya oracles who dance before their deities have the power to spot any stranger trying to enter the temple. They also exorcise evil spirits from possessed persons who may frequently belong to a high caste.

Votive animals are brought on the tenth day to Bhadrakāḷi mostly by the members of the high castes. A few of these are allotted to the Poleya deities by the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi. While half of each decapitated animal before Bhadrakāḷi is shared by *okkas* belonging to the high castes in Kuklūr, the animals decapitated before Poleya deities are not so shared. The Poleyas share among themselves the animals decapitated before their deities. The allotment of some of the animals brought by members of the high castes to the Poleya deities constitutes a gift by the high castes to Poleyas. This might be regarded as a return gift for the twenty-five chickens which were 'given' on the ninth day by the Poleyas to the high-caste people.

The position of the Poleyas varies from festival to festival. In some festivals the exclusion aspect seems to be stressed to the neglect of other aspects, whereas in certain others, along with the exclusion-aspect, the solidarity-aspect and the compensation-aspect are all stressed, but with the first mentioned predominating over the others.

VIII

The village is a social unit of considerable strength, and this is in spite of the fact that caste-ties are always tending to stretch beyond the village (and even *nāḍ*). A village is a multi-caste association and the unity of the village always demands that caste-ties

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621 are checked sufficiently to prevent their overflowing the village, and that unity with other castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy is stressed. This was easier in the past because the hierarchy was tacitly accepted by the people, and low castes like Mēdas and Poleyas did not object to participating with the other castes in the village at a lower level, or even being completely [628] excluded on certain ritual occasions. Again the widespread prevalence of feuds between villages and between *nāḍs* tended to emphasize the unity of the village and check the segmentary action of caste.

796 621 784 At the *tappaḍaka* ritual, the members of the village or *nāḍ* celebrating the festival of the local village-deity undertake to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions while the festival lasts. The villagers may not kill an animal or break an egg or coconut for the table; and toddy may not be tapped within the village. Villagers who want to consume these articles have to import them from outside. The festival-priests, who are more important than ordinary villagers, may not consume even imported meat and toddy. They have to observe strict vegetarianism and teetotalism. They are also required to observe strict continence and avoid touching laymen.

796 784 In the Kētrappa festival, women in their periods are required to leave the village and return to it only after the festival is over. Such a woman is in a condition of pollution; and her presence in the village is regarded as inconsistent with the ritual status of the village. People in a condition of birth- or death-pollution are also not allowed to participate in the festival.

No marriage may be performed during the festival. If a person dies in the village he has to be buried quietly, without the customary firing of guns and band.

These restrictions serve to show that the village (or *nāḍ*) is the concerned entity in the festival. The restrictions increase as concern increases—the festival-priests have to observe more restrictions than the laymen. The village (or *nāḍ*) observing the festival is marked off from other villages by these restrictions. Every villager knows that failure by any one of them to observe the restrictions might result in some misfortune to the entire village. The unity of the village is projected to the 'mystical' plane and is supported by ritual sanctions.

A brief account of a part of the ritual of enumeration of restric-

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

796 688 misdemeanour during the festival. Again, the latter may be regarded as more secular than the former: at the festivals of the village-deities the members of the village take a vow in the name of god to keep the rules and restrictions, whereas at the harvest festival no such vow is taken.

796 [535] At the end of the harvest festival there is a village dance (*ūr kōlu*) in which all the adult males in the village have to take part; and on the following day, or two days later, there is a dance for the entire *nāḍ* to which every village belonging to the particular *nāḍ* sends its representatives. Each village makes a special point of sending its best dancers to the *nāḍ* dance.

[224] The village dance is followed by a collective hunt by the villagers. (A collective hunt may also be organized by a *nāḍ*.) Every adult male in the village is required to be present at the hunt, and a successful hunt implies a co-ordination of the activities of numerous individuals. Lack of proper co-ordination has to be paid for with life or limb.

[527] The festivals of village-deities, the harvest festival, and the festival of arms all terminate with a dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*). The boar that is killed in the collective hunt is cooked on this occasion. If the game is not enough to go round, then one or two domesticated pigs or goats are slaughtered in addition. Each house brings its own cooked rice-flour to the dinner. The headman selects five men to serve food to the men.

The men bring halves of coconut shells or leaf-cups for liquor: a young man is given only one cup of liquor while an elder is entitled to more. The singers get an extra share of meat and liquor. The Poleyas do not sit with the rest, but are given a quantity of meat and liquor which they consume by themselves.

[62] Both the village dance and the village hunt stress the unity of the village. In the case of the village hunt, there is the additional element of the threat of danger from the boar or tiger or other wild animal. The village dinner is rightly called *ūrormé* or 'village harmony', as it maintains and increases the harmony of the village.

IX

634 628 Like the village and *okka*, the *nāḍ* is a real social unit and not a mere administrative division imposed from above by the Rājas. In fact, before the political integration of Coorg by the Rājas, the maximum political unit seems to have been a union of two or three

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

professed patronage of the Brahmans and that they gradually dropped into brahmanical habits of life and thought. A good many now wear the holy thread, and all profess to abstain from meat and fermented liquors. The return to Brahman initiation and dress was brought about by a Havika Brahman whose family exercised spiritual influence over the Amma Kodagas. They are still unlettered. There is a tradition current among them that in former times one half of Coorg belonged to the Ammas, and the rest to the Coorgs. The Ammas by virtue of their priesthood held their land free of rent. Their lands are even now very lightly taxed.

Internal Structure

The Amma Coorgs form a homogeneous community. There are two gotras among them, the Baradwaja gotra and Viswamitra gotra. They marry within the same gotra.

Marriage Customs and Ceremonies

The Amma Coorgs do not intermarry with the Coorgs, but the separation may be of recent origin. Marriage settlement is made only after the agreement of horoscopes. The young man's father, uncle, and other close relations assemble, when coconuts, plantains, and betel leaves are handed to the bride in token of settlement. The auspicious day for celebration is fixed to send invitations to the relatives on both sides. The dress and ornaments to be given to the bride are also settled. The preliminary formalities that are gone through are :—

1. The boy's party going to the house of the bride.
2. Their welcome with refreshments.
3. Nischithambulam.

The essential formalities are *mukadarsana*, and garlanding and *panigrahana*, tali-tying, presenting the bride with the wedding dress and ornaments, and feasting. There is no *homam* as among the Coorgs, but there exists the cutting of plantains in common with the Coorgs. On the arrival of the bride at the bridegroom's house, she puts rice on the lamp. On the third day they bathe, and celebrate the *sobhanaprasta*, if the girl has attained puberty already.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

When a girl becomes pregnant, *pumsavana* and *simantha* are performed. When she is about to become a mother, she is confined to a separate room. Her mother or some aged woman acts as midwife. Pollution lasts for eleven days after which she bathes to become pure. But it is only after 40 days that ganga puja is performed, when she bathes and becomes pure. Only then can she enter the kitchen. Cradling the baby takes place on the eleventh day. The naming ceremony takes place the same day.